FLEAS

A lot of fleas in the house will make life miserable for you and your pets. Flea bites make you very itchy, and fleas can make you or your pets sick. The cat flea causes most household flea problems. The cat flea is the most common flea on cats, dogs, and many wild mammals. Fleas come into the house on your pet or on some other mammal like a mouse, rat, or squirrel. Cat fleas will also bite people, but they prefer other animals.

Fleas are parasites, which means they cannot live without an animal host. Adult fleas try to stay on an animal all of the time. When fleas lay eggs, the eggs fall off of the animal. Most of the eggs will be found in the areas where the animal spends the most time, like the pet's resting areas. The eggs hatch into tiny worms called larvae. The larvae do not bite people or pets; they eat tiny bits of skin and adult flea droppings that fall from the animal. After a few weeks, the larvae turn into a resting stage called pupae that are inside of a cocoon. The pupae do not move or eat. In a few days (or a few months if there is no animal around), the adult fleas come out of the cocoons. When they feel warmth or vibrations from a nearby animal, the adult fleas come out the cocoons very fast, and bite the first animal they find. Usually, the new host is your pet, but it may be you.

Fleas become a problem when:
1. The host animal is taken away. The family moves away with the pet, or the pet is moved outside to stay. When a person or animal comes into the room, hundreds of starving fleas may come out at the same time.
2. There are so many fleas that there are not enough animal hosts. Without enough animals, the fleas begin to bite people.
3. A wild or stray animal is living under or near the house. If the animal leaves or dies, the fleas may come in the house to look for a host.

It is easier to avoid a flea problem than it is to get rid of a big flea problem.

The following 5 steps will help you prevent a flea outbreak and protect your health:

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Call your Local Cooperative Extension Service office.
Visit our Websites:
www.gafamilies.com
www.entomology.ent.uga.edu

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University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service.
College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences and College of Family and Consumers Sciences Cooperating.

This publication was funded through a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.
The authors thank the following reviewers:
Susan Whitney - University of Delaware
Chris DiFonzo - Michigan State University
Nancy Hinkle - University of Georgia

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Bulletin # HACE-E-59 | February -2004

Issued in furthear of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, The University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating.

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The appearance of any trade name in this bulletin is not intended to endorse that product nor convey negative implications of unmentioned products.
Some less expensive products for dogs are available at your local store. Look for a product that contains permethrin; these products come in a small container. Apply the product on the back of your dog according to the directions. **DO NOT USE PERMETHRIN PRODUCTS ON CATS.** They will make cats very sick.

There are flea products for cats available at your local store, but they only work for a short time. A flea comb is a good choice for a cat; it only takes about ten minutes to flea comb a cat.

If you cannot control a flea population in your home with frequent vacuuming or steam cleaning, you may need to apply pesticide to your home. Flea bombs are not a good idea. The pesticide may not reach the fleas under furniture or in cracks, but your entire home may be exposed to pesticide. Look for products that contain boric acid, borate, or methoprene.

Methoprene keeps flea eggs and larvae from growing into adults. Methoprene does not kill adult fleas, and it breaks down very quickly outdoors. Your local county Extension office can direct you to effective flea products. **NEVER** use a pesticide in your home unless the label says that you can. **ALWAYS** follow the label directions carefully; some pesticides can make your family or pet sick.